Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Previously Presented) An axle assembly comprising:

a tube disposed about a longitudinal axis and having first and second end portions and a center portion;

wherein said first and second end portions have a uniform wall thickness and said center portion has a cross-sectional wall thickness that is uniform at first and second axially spaced segments and a non-uniform cross-sectional wall thickness both between the axially spaced segments and between each of the axially spaced segments and said tube end portions.

2. (Original) An axle assembly as described in claim 1, wherein said tube first and second end portions and center portion have a common outer diameter.

3. (Original) An axle assembly as described in claim 1, wherein said tube center portion between said first and second axially space segments has an generally elliptical cross-sectional interior contour.

4. (Previously Presented) An axle assembly as described in claim 3, wherein said wall thickness at said center portion axially spaced segments is greater than a minor wall thickness of said center portion between said axially spaced segments.

5. (Previously Presented) An axle assembly as described in claim 3, wherein said wall thickness at said center portion axially spaced segments is at least equal to a major wall thickness of said center portion between said axially spaced segments.

6. (Original) An axle assembly as described in claim 1, wherein said center portion between said first and second axially spaced segments and respective first and second end portions has an interior contour which is elliptical.

7. (Previously Presented) An axle assembly as described in claim 6, wherein said wall thickness at said center portion axially spaced segments is greater than a minor wall thickness of said center portion between said axially spaced segments and said tube end portions.

8. (Previously Presented) An axle assembly as described in claim 6, wherein said wall thickness at said center portion axially spaced segments is at least equal to a major wall thickness of said center portion between said axially spaced segments and said tube end portions.

9. (Original) An axle assembly as described in claim 2, where said center portion axially spaced segments provide points of suspension system attachment and said wall thickness of said center portion axially spaced segments is greater than said major wall thickness of said center portion.

10. (Previously Presented) An axle assembly, comprising:

a constant outer diameter tube having first and second end portions and a center portion;

wherein said first and second end portions have uniform wall thickness and said center portion has a cross-sectional wall thickness that is uniform at first and second axially spaced segments and a generally elliptical interior diameter with a non-uniform cross-sectional wall thickness between the axially spaced segments and between each of the axially spaced segments and said tube end portions.

11-12. (Cancelled).